

# Mississippi Courts

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## Senior Status Judge Betty Sanders receives Chief Justice Award



Judge Betty Sanders, left, receives the Chief Justice Award from Chief Justice Mike Randolph at the Bar Convention.

Senior Status Judge Betty W. Sanders of Green-

wood is the recipient of the 2023 Chief Justice Award.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Mike Randolph presented the award on July 20 at the Mississippi Bar Convention in Biloxi. The annual award recognizes individuals whose actions significantly impact the law, the administration of justice, and the people of the state of Mississippi.

Introducing Judge Sanders as the award honoree, Chief Justice Randolph called her “one of the hardest working judges in the state.”

After serving for 20 years as a Circuit Judge in the Mississippi Delta, she retired from office in 2014, but continued to hear cases by appointment as a senior status judge. And when COVID struck, she was

among the veteran judges who were appointed to help relieve the court docket backlog. Judge Sanders was one of four special Circuit Judges appointed on August 4, 2020, to assist the Hinds Circuit Court. She continued hearing cases in Hinds Circuit Court through January 2023, resolving 182 post-conviction relief petitions and 132 criminal cases.

Chief Justice Randolph also praised Judge Sanders for her work supervising a drug intervention court. She established a Drug Court for the 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit of Leflore, Sunflower and Washington counties in June 2002. At that time, only two other drug courts were operating in the state.

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## Chief Justice Randolph honored with Judicial Excellence Award

Chief Justice Mike Randolph was honored with the 2023 Judicial Excellence Award on July 20.

Newly inducted Mississippi Bar President Jenny Tyler Baker and outgoing Bar President Blake Teller presented the award during the annual business session at the Mississippi Bar Convention in Biloxi.

The Bar’s Board of Commissioners established the Judicial Excellence Award to recognize judges who exceed the call of their judicial office. Recipients exemplify judicial excellence through leader-

ship in advancing the quality and efficiency of justice and possess high ideals, character and integrity.

Teller said, “It is difficult to name a judge who has done more to advance justice and set an example for judicial excellence during the pandemic than did our Mississippi Supreme Court Chief Justice Mike Randolph. After only one year as Chief Justice, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and created challenges for our courts and judicial system that we had never imagined or experienced. During all of the challeng-

es, Chief Justice Randolph led the judicial system with a steady and supportive hand to ensure the courts across our state fulfilled their constitutional and statutory duties. He kept them open while balancing the need to keep the public, attorneys, court staff and our judges safe....Throughout the past three years, he has not wavered from doing what was necessary to advance the quality and efficiency of justice.”

Teller quoted Chief Justice Randolph, who said early in the pandemic,

“Especially in times like these with a national emergency, nerves are frayed and people are scared. That’s when the courts have to be at their strongest.” Teller said, “During this national emergency, our Bar was fortunate to have a strong leader, Chief Justice Randolph, leading our courts.”

Reflecting on 19 years of service on the Supreme Court - a fourth of his life - Chief Justice Randolph said, “I’ve never had anything I have ever done that I’ve enjoyed as much, as challenging as it is.”

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## Judge Betty Sanders receives Chief Justice Award, *continued from page 1*



Judges congratulating Judge Betty Sanders, center, in pink jacket, are, from left, U. S. Magistrate Judge LaKeysha Greer Issac, Circuit Judge Debra Gibbs, Justice Court Judge Neysha Sanders, County Judge Carlyn Hicks, Chancellor Crystal Wise Martin, retired Chancellor Patricia Wise, retired Chancellor Denise Owens, Presiding Justice Leslie King, retired Circuit Judge Lillie Blackmon Sanders, Chancellor Bennie Richard, Court of Appeals Judge Deborah McDonald, Workers Compensation Administrative Judge Melba Dixon and Circuit Judge Toni Walker Terrett.

Chief Justice Randolph said that Judge Sanders took a personal interest in the well-being of all drug court participants. “She realized when she was getting these people in to deal with that they didn’t have much food. They didn’t have much clothing.... She starts a food bank for them and brings clothes.”

Judge Sanders’ children and grandchildren accompanied her at the award presentation. Chief Justice Randolph noted that Judge Sanders’ family are all legal and medical professionals. Her late husband Alix H. Sanders Sr. was a trailblazing attorney. Their children are Leflore County Justice Court Judge Neysha Sanders, Dr. Neeka Sanders Johnson, an OB-GYN, and Dr. Alix Sanders Jr., a dentist.

Judge Sanders was an educator before she pursued a career in law. She graduated from Alcorn State University in 1966 with a Bachelor of Science degree in business education. She earned a Masters of Business Education degree in 1971 from Bowling Green State University in

Ohio. She pursued course work toward a specialist degree in business education from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. She taught business at Coahoma Junior College, then at Mississippi Valley State University. After she finished law school, she taught business law and court systems at MVSU for nearly 20 years.

Judge Sanders’ first work in the legal profession was with the Legal Services office in Oxford while she was a student at the University of Mississippi School of Law. She became a staff attorney in the Greenwood office of North Mississippi Rural Legal Services after finishing law school, and worked there 1979 to 1981.

Continuing her work to assist low-income people after she left the bench, she joined the Board of Directors of North Mississippi Rural Legal Services in January 2021.

“Judge Sanders has provided exemplary service to the Board by providing thoughtful leadership, brilliant advice and counsel,

and superior guidance in the tradition of her judicial temperament of excellence,” said Ben Cole II, executive director of North Mississippi Rural Legal Services. “Judge Sanders is truly an asset to NMRLS and its client community.”

Cole noted that Judge Sanders continues the work of Alix Sanders, who was executive director of North Mississippi Rural Legal Services.

Judge Sanders also served for more than 20 years as a member of the Board of Directors of the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project and its predecessor, the Pro Bono Project. She was honored with the Pro Bono Publico Award.

She joined her husband’s law firm in Greenwood in 1981. She was the first African-American attorney to serve as co-counsel to the Greenwood Public School District. She worked in the firm until 1989, when she was appointed as a magistrate to hear cases filed by prisoners at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman. She served as a magistrate

1989-1994. She was the first African-American elected to Subdistrict 3 of the 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court in 1994.

She has been a leader of the bench and bar. She is former chair, vice-chair and secretary-treasurer of the Conference of Circuit Judges and was on the Conference’s Legislative Committee. She served on the Commission on Judicial Performance, the Complaint Tribunal and Ethics Committee of the Mississippi Bar, and as secretary of the Magnolia Bar Association. She also served on the Mississippi Model Jury Instructions Commission. She was a faculty facilitator at the National Judicial College.

Since January 2023, she has served as attorney for the Leflore County Board of Supervisors.

She is a member of the American Bar Association, the National Bar Association, American Trial Lawyers Association, National Association of Women Judges, Mississippi Bar, Magnolia Bar Association and the Leflore County Bar Association.

## Chief Justice Randolph receives Judicial Excellence Award, *continued from page 1*



Chief Justice Mike Randolph, at right, speaks to the Mississippi Bar Convention in Biloxi on July 20. Seated, left to right, are new Mississippi Bar President Jenny Tyler Baker and Immediate Past President Blake Teller.

Gov. Haley Barbour appointed Randolph to the Mississippi Supreme Court on April 23, 2004. He is in his third term on the Court, having been elected to the Court's Southern District in 2004, 2012 and 2020.

He is the longest currently serving member of the Supreme Court. He became Chief Justice on Feb. 1, 2019.

He was decorated for heroism in Vietnam, where he served with the U.S.

Army 1st Infantry Division, the Big Red One, before he was honorably discharged. During law school, he was appointed as a Reserve officer in the U.S. Navy Judge Advocate General Corps. He is a graduate of

the Naval Justice School in Newport, Rhode Island. He graduated from Rollins College in Winter Park, Fla., with a B.S. degree in business administration. He earned his Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law, where he was president of the Law School Student Body.

He began practicing law in 1975 in Biloxi with the firm Ross, King and Randolph. He then practiced with the firm Bryan, Nelson, Allen and Schroeder on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. He opened a Hattiesburg office for Bryan, Nelson, Allen and Schroeder in 1976. He later formed the firm of Bryan Nelson Randolph, P.A., serving as President and CEO until his appointment to the Supreme Court.

## Pierce returns to private practice, works as MC Law Associate Dean



Judge Cynthia Brewer, at left, presents a plaque to Randy Pierce on behalf of the MJC Board of Governors on April 26.

Randy Pierce is back home in Leakesville, practicing law and working as Associate Dean of Advancement for Mississippi College School of Law after serving for seven and

a half years as director of the Mississippi Judicial College.

With 24 years of state service, "I'm not good at retirement. I'm retired from state service, but not

retired," Pierce said.

He is a partner in the firm of Bordis, Danos and Pierce. He has an office in Lucedale; his law partners are in Ocean Springs.

He recently gave a quick phone interview in between handling business and meeting with a client. His work has included representing clients in Chancery Court and in other civil litigation as well as arbitration and mediation.

"It's been fun being back on this side of the bench where the lawyers are," he said. He's come full circle after serving in the Legislature and on the Supreme Court and helping train just about every judge and court staff member in the state as Executive Director of the Missis-

issippi Judicial College.

"I'm enjoying it. I love practicing law. Being able to walk in and be the voice for them is powerful stuff."

He's enjoying things that some might take for granted. "Most entertaining for me is docket call." He shows up early and talks with other lawyers before tending to business in court.

He works part-time as Associate Dean. He started June 1. He works one day a week in Jackson at the law school and remotely the remainder of the week making phone calls, sending and receiving emails and representing MC Law at events.

He is raising funds for a projected \$7.5 million

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**Randy Pierce, center receives a plaque, a special flag flown in his honor by the Mississippi Air National Guard and a gift basket on May 31 from Municipal Judges, left to right, Bill Halford Jr., Ryan Bruhl, Hal Neilson and Robert D. Jones.**

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building campaign that will remodel and modernize the facility. “There is a building campaign to get people to invest in what is going on over there. It’s exciting. The law school is going to look so much better,” he said. “Our goal is to get the funds necessary to make this happen as soon as we can.”

He also works with the annual fund for student scholarships, fund-raising for faculty support and funding for hands-on clinics provided by the law school.

Next spring, he will teach trial practice alongside Justice David Ishee. “It’s hard for me to be at a law school without teaching law students. That’s fun,” he said. He previously taught at MC Law while serving on the Supreme Court, and at the University of Mississippi School of Law while serving as executive director of the Judicial College.

This past spring’s judicial conferences were a long goodbye, with each training conference paying tribute to Pierce. His leadership moved the program

beyond judicial education, making the Judicial College an easily accessible anytime resource for information for the judiciary and the public.

The Board of Governors and staff of the Mississippi Judicial College presented a plaque to Pierce during a reception on April 26, the opening day of the Spring Trial and Appellate Judges Conference in Biloxi. Chancellor Cynthia Brewer of Madison, chair of the Board of Governors, said, “It was an honor and a privilege to work with Randy Pierce these few years that flew by.”

The Mississippi Court of Appeals presented Pierce with a resolution honoring his public service.

The Mississippi Municipal Judges Association honored Pierce during the spring conference that began on his last day as director, May 31.

Pierce said that he is enjoying being at home in Leakesville – every night. From the time he joined the Mississippi Legislature in 2000, work kept him away, with the exception



**Presiding Judge Virginia Carlton, at right, reads a Court of Appeals Resolution as Judge David McCarty, center, holds the framed copy.**

of the almost four years when he was a chancellor of the 16<sup>th</sup> Chancery. He worked weeks in Jackson and had weekends at home as a Supreme Court Justice 2009 - 2016, and the commute got longer when he went to Oxford to serve as Executive Director of the Mississippi Judicial College in February 2016. He and his wife Cheryl Pierce, a lawyer with a real estate closing practice in Lucedale, traded weekend travel between Oxford and Leakesville. “I’m coming

off the road,” he said.

He also has immersed himself in the community. On a recent Thursday night, he picked up the microphone and announced for a middle school football game.

“I love being back home and I’m going to spend this part of my journey through this old world back where I started, and helping where I can to make quality of life better and contribute as a productive citizen to my community.”

# Chancellor Amanda Rainey appointed to 12th Chancery



**Chancellor Amanda Trawick Rainey, center, takes the oath of office on June 16 in Lauderdale County Chancery Court in Meridian. Chancellor Charles Smith, at left, administers the oath as Judge Rainey’s husband, Jeff Rainey, holds the Bible.**



**Judge Amanda Trawick Rainey joins 12th Chancery Court.**

Chancellor for 16 years.

Judge Rainey shared thoughts on the first three months in office. “It has been really busy, but I have enjoyed every minute of it. Our docket was pushed for several months due to the vacancy.

“It is so amazing how differently you can view a case from the bench as opposed to an attorney advocating for his or her client. In every case I try to be as fair as possible while also following the law. I am truly grateful for this job and hope to continue serving in this position for a long time.”

Judge Rainey, 49, practiced law in Chancery Court for more than 23 years, and served as a Special Master. Her practice included adoptions, divorce and child custody, conservatorships, guardianships, estate planning, probate matters and real estate. She also served as Meridian City Prosecutor for 21 years.

She was a partner of Witherspoon & Compton, LLC. She told some former firm associates at the ceremony, “I love you. You taught me so much. I am going to miss you.”

She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Mississippi State University, a Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law and a Master of Law in taxation from the University of Alabama School of Law.

Chancellor Amanda Trawick Rainey of Meridian was sworn in on June 16 to the 12<sup>th</sup> Chancery Court. Her term began June 19.

Chancellor Charles Smith administered the oath and welcomed her to the bench. He said that she was professional, courteous, knowledgeable, competent and punctual in all of her work.

Judge Rainey thanked Gov. Tate Reeves for the appointment, saying, “This is such an honor to be appointed.”

A special election will be held in 2024. The district includes Clarke and Lauderdale counties.

Chancellor Lawrence Primeaux retired from the 12<sup>th</sup> Chancery post on March 31, creating a vacancy. He served as

# 114 new attorneys take oaths to practice during fall ceremony



Mississippi Bar President Jenny Tyler Baker, foreground, at left, addresses the Bar Admissions Ceremony on Sept. 28. Seated, left to right, are Robert Arledge, Dean Frederick Slabach of the University of Mississippi School of Law and Dean John Anderson of Mississippi College School of Law.



Justice David M. Ishee prepares to administer the oath to practice before the Mississippi Supreme Court.

One hundred and fourteen new lawyers were admitted to the Mississippi Bar during a ceremony on Sept. 28.

The pass rate for the fall bar exam was 72.8 percent, said Gwendolyn Baptist-Rucker, chair of the Board of Bar Admissions.

“You not only met the

requirements; you exceeded the requirements,” she told new admittees and family and friends who packed the Supreme Court’s En Banc Courtroom.

Baptist-Rucker said that one person scored in the top 1 percent in the nation, two were in the top 4 percent and seven were in the top 10 percent.

Board of Bar Admissions records show that the pass rate for 2023, taking into account February and July bar exams, stands at 64.7 percent, with some cases still awaiting review. The pass rate for the February bar exam was 42.9 percent. The pass rate for 2022 was 70.5 percent. The annual pass rate has increased from a low of 48 percent in 2018.

Dean Frederick Slabach of the University of Mississippi School of Law and Dean John Anderson of

the Mississippi College School of Law took turns reading the names of each new bar admittee. Robert Arledge of the Bar Admissions Ceremony Committee read the names of out-of-state law school admittees.

Slabach told the group that they have a higher calling. “Lawyers are leaders.”

Anderson said the ceremony marks “my absolute favorite day to be Dean.”

Bar and judicial leaders offered words of wisdom and encouragement before the judges swore in the new attorneys to practice before the state courts and the U.S. District Courts for the Northern and Southern Districts of Mississippi.

Young Lawyers Division President-Elect Brittany Brooks Frankel encouraged new layers to focus

on their own personal strengths. She said the biggest waste of time is comparing oneself to others.

“As attorneys, we are a profession of community helpers. Often times we see people at their worst, and they depend upon us to do our best to assist them,” Frankel said.

And when difficult times come in practice, “asking for help is not a sign of weakness.” Frankel commended to their attention the children’s book *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*, a New York Times Bestseller. In the book, when asked what was the bravest thing he had ever said, the wise horse replied, “Help.”

“Asking for help isn’t giving up. It’s refusing to give up,” Frankel said. “Practice taking everything in stride, knowing that this too shall pass.”

She also reminded them of opportunities for *pro bono* service. A paper airplane sits on her desk. A special needs child who she represented *pro bono* made the toy. “It reminds me of why I became an attorney in the first place.”

Hinds County Chancellor Crystal Wise Martin recognized family and friends. “None of us makes it here alone.”

She told attorneys to have passion and purpose, to be prepared and polite, and to believe in the power of prayer. She called it “the power of being polite,” as in “get more flies with honey than vinegar.”

She reminded attorneys that they have a duty to their clients. “The results of these court proceedings can forever change the



**Lawyers take the oath to practice before the Mississippi Supreme Court at a ceremony on Sept. 28 in the En Banc Courtroom.**

course of their lives. It may be their only time to be heard.”

Justice David Ishee said, “The courts of our land are the great leveler where all men are created equal” — famously stated by Gregory Peck in his movie portrayal of lawyer Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Justice Ishee said the movie and the book inspired him at age 10. The quote applies equally to Fortune 500 companies and the indigent.

Senior Judge Michael P. Mills of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Mississippi told new lawyers that their lives have been structured, focused on passing law school. He told them to expand their experiences. “Read great literature. Someday you will be arguing before a jury or a judge

and you will need a quote.” Read widely. Read the classics, Shakespeare and Faulkner. Listen to good music. Travel. “The more that you can do to broaden your experiences, the better advocate you become.”

Judge Mills said attributes that set lawyers apart are “courage to advocate for your client. Courage is more than recklessness, more than bravery. It is overcoming something within yourself and acting not only for yourself but for others.” Have empathy, kindness and humility. “Treat everyone you meet as though you will live with him or her forever, because you well may...A little humility helps too, particularly in the courtroom.”

Judge Mills admitted that wasn’t the speech he planned to give. Those remarks, care-

fully prepared in three weeks of cogitation, were left behind in a manila folder on his desk. He picked up a different folder that contained a selection of poems by W. H. Auden. So he read from “Friday’s Child,” which Auden wrote in memory of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. “And if you don’t know who Dietrich Bonhoeffer was, my point has been made.”

Historical note: Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a martyred German Lutheran pastor and Nazi resistance fighter.

U.S. District Judge Kristi H. Johnson of the Southern District of Mississippi said, “As an attorney now, all you truly do have is your reputation. You need to guard it ferociously.”

Be honest with yourself, the client and the court. Keep an open mind.

And she told them to

reach for opportunities, even if they are a long shot. She said that all of her colleagues are male Ivy League graduates. “I don’t check either of those boxes, but I threw my name into the hat for this judgeship even when people told me that I had no chance of getting it, and here I am.”

She quoted a sports proverb: “You miss 100 percent of the shots you don’t take.”

She also reminded them to be as kind to the janitor as to the CEO.

Mississippi Bar President Jenny Tyler Baker told new lawyers to keep an open mind and an open heart. Don’t let fears guide choices, and stick to the high road. “You are the future of the profession. It’s an honorable profession. Keep it that way.”

## New law strengthens access to court language interpreters



**Eighteen class participants along with instructors and staff gathered for a photo during a break in an Ethics and Skills Building seminar for prospective court language interpreters in Jackson on Aug. 3. The class was the largest ever for AOC.**

The 2023 Mississippi Legislature revised laws requiring qualified language interpreters for people of limited English proficiency in court proceedings to provide broader access to assistance for those who are limited in their understanding of English or who speak English as a second language.

The new law, which went into effect July 1, mandates court appointment of a qualified interpreter in criminal cases at no cost to the defendant, with the cost borne by the county or municipality. Changes in the criminal statute are in Miss. Code Ann. Section 99-17-7.

New legislation also requires court interpreters to be paid by the county or municipality in civil cases, so limited English proficient individuals will no longer have to pay for a court interpreter. In the past there has been confusion as to when LEP individuals are entitled to use a court interpreter. Revi-

sions to the statutes clarified that LEP individuals are entitled to use an interpreter in any instance arising out of or pertaining to the individual's involvement in litigation. See Miss. Code Ann. Section 9-21-73 (4).

This provision ensures that LEP individuals have a right to an interpreter during all phases of litigation, including hearings and depositions. This provision applies not only to litigants, but also to witnesses, said Deenie Miller, director of language access for the Administrative Office of Courts.

"The new law ensures that limited English proficient individuals receive access to qualified court interpreters from the beginning of a case until the end of a trial, no matter what their involvement is regarding the litigation. This includes a plaintiff filing a lawsuit in the Clerk's Office, a defendant appearing in court responding to a summons, or

a witness testifying at a trial. The cost of the interpreter can no longer be assessed to the LEP individual," Miller said.

The AOC requested legislative changes earlier this year to make sure that people of limited English proficiency receive protections required by federal law.

The legislation expanded the definition of who is a person of limited English proficiency, or LEP, beyond the former definition of simply a party or witness who cannot readily understand or communicate in spoken English. New language in the statute adds "or who does not speak English as his or her primary language" and "has a limited ability to read, speak, write or understand English."

Miller said, "There have been differing opinions as to who has the right to a court interpreter. Now it is clear that appointing a court interpreter is proper for individuals who may

speak some English but are not fluent. The new definition further strengthens access to justice to our LEP population."

Judges are required to appoint the most qualified interpreter available.

The Legislature enacted a new statute that defines the previously established three categories of court interpreters: certified, registered and non-credentialed. The legislation also adopted an order of preference, with certified interpreters first, then registered, then non-credentialed.

"This will ensure that every LEP individual has the right to the most qualified interpreter available," Miller said. "We want to encourage anyone who meets the qualifications for pursuing our Court Interpreter Program to attend the seminar so we can expand our court interpreter roster. We often are forced to utilize court interpreters from other states because we do not have enough interpreters to

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## Commission on a Uniform Youth Court System begins work



**Judge Brad Touchstone**

A commission studying the state's varied Youth Court system began work recently.

Circuit Judge Brad A. Touchstone of Purvis was elected chairman of the Mississippi Commission on a Uniform Youth Court System and Procedures. Lee County Court Judge Staci Bevill of Tupelo was elected vice-chair and Madison County Court Judge Staci O'Neal of Madison was elected secretary during the Commis-



**Judge Staci Bevill**

sion's organizational meeting Aug. 31 at the Capitol.

The Commission began discussions of whether to make changes to the existing youth court system, potential costs, and what is in the best interests of the children who come under the supervision of the Youth Courts. The webcast of the meeting is at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXF9Imh9nhI>.

The Commission is expected to submit a report



**Judge Staci O'Neal**

to the Legislature in October 2024.

The big question is, "Would a uniform statewide system be desirable?" said Sen. Jeremy England of Vancleave.

Judge Touchstone called that question "the elephant in the room."

Another consideration is whether counties can join together to share a shelter or a detention center to serve a multi-county area. The idea of district county courts has been presented

to the Legislature in the past, but failed to gain support.

Department of Child Protective Services Commissioner Andrea Sanders said, "While I don't so much care what the court looks like, having a consistent court across the state, in all 82 counties, is I think vital for us to get the kind of outcomes that we need so that children and families can thrive."

Department of Human Services Executive Director Robert Anderson said, "We need a statewide system. I respect, appreciate and applaud the lawyers who step up and serve as referees. They are filling a gap that is sorely needed to be filled, but I think we would all agree, those of us who deal with the Youth Court system regularly, that it would be a major improvement if each county either had its own Youth Court judge or it had access to a Youth Court judge."

Anderson repeated what others have said regarding long stays in foster care: "Children don't fare well when they stay in child welfare for a long time," he said, adding, "and a fully statewide functioning Youth Court system I think helps us to move toward those goals of permanency or reunification or whatever that looks like."

Rep. Jansen Owen of Poplarville said, "I just want us to realize that every child has access to a Youth Court right now as it stands under the current law....If there are issues with the system, I would

### More credentialed language interpreters available, *continued from page 8*

meet the demand. As more people learn about the new legislation, the demand will continue to increase."

House Bill 1217 was introduced by Judiciary A and Judiciary En Banc Chair Angela Cockerham of Magnolia, Judiciary A Vice-Chair Rep. Thomas U. Reynolds of Charleston and Rep. Otis Anthony of Indianola. Gov. Tate Reeves approved the legislation on March 13.

The Legislature also appropriated \$150,000 to the AOC's language access budget. Some of the

funds will be used to make LEP individuals aware of their right to an interpreter. Miller said, "One of our first big projects will be providing signs in clerk's offices and courtrooms translated into multiple languages so that people who are limited English proficient know they are entitled to an interpreter."

The Administrative Office of Courts has 44 credentialed interpreters; 11 live outside Mississippi but are available to travel or by Zoom. Most speak Spanish. There are also interpreters for Arabic,

French, Mandarin Chinese, German, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Yoruba and Pidgin English.

There were 25 interpreters in October 2022. Miller has worked on recruiting since joining AOC in July 2022 as the state's first full-time language access coordinator. Eighteen people participated in an Ethics and Skills Building class in August, the largest class ever since Mississippi adopted rules for court interpreters.

The next Ethics and Skill Building seminar will be held Dec. 14-15 in Jackson.

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## Judge Michael Dickinson honored for work with adoption



**Judge Michael Dickinson**

Harrison County Court and Youth Court Judge

Michael Dickinson of Gulfport has been selected as an Angels in Adoption honoree by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute.

Sen. Roger Wicker chose Judge Dickinson for the award. The Institute in a Sept. 14 letter announcing the selection said that Judge Dickinson will be honored for his “tremendous work in the adoption, foster care and child welfare community.”

Judge Dickinson said, “I’m humbled and I’m honored and I’m grateful. But I will say that there are a lot of people and organi-

zations in our community that are well deserving, and more deserving of the award than I am.”

The award will be presented during a ceremony in Washington, D.C., during a two-day Angels in Adoption Leadership Program on Capitol Hill on Oct. 17 and 18.

The Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, founded in 2001, is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to raising awareness about the millions of children worldwide in need of safe

adoptive homes.

The honor comes as Judge Dickinson and his wife Siobhan are working to finalize their second adoption, of a 6-year-old son. They adopted a son on Sept. 10, 2021; he will soon turn 5. They have three biological children, ages 14, 15 and 17.

How do they manage five children? Judge Dickinson credits his wife, who is a fifth grade science teacher. “She is superwoman.” The teenagers also are pretty good babysitters.

## Commission on Uniform Youth Court to examine data, *continued from page 9*

like to come at this with a mindset of how can we fix the current system as opposed to jumping in and looking at some transformative major reforms.” He was concerned about the expense of major reform.

Chancellor Gerald Martin of Raleigh, whose district includes five rural counties, said he expects the same vigorous opposition that local officials have expressed in the past to a statewide county court system. “They have every time it’s been brought up because of the sheer cost of it to the counties.”

Judge Touchstone and Judge O’Neal emphasized the need for data to study and compare the work of the various courts. Judge Touchstone said, “What lack of uniformity exists? What data do we need to determine whether or not that lack of uniformity means worse outcomes, and finally we can start talking about what structural changes are needed in the system to effect more desirable outcomes?”

Discrepancies are apparent in Youth Court data published in the 2022 Annual Report of the Mississippi Supreme Court, DPS Assistant Deputy Commissioner Abby Young told the Commission at its second meeting on Sept. 22. “We can see there are inconsistencies,” she said.

Judge Beville said, “This kind of makes the case that there are 82 different things going on in 82 different counties.” But, she said, “The children are not lost. Don’t walk away from here thinking children are not being protected. CPS has these children in their hands.”

Director Sanders of CPS at the inaugural meeting said one area of inquiry needs to be a comparison by county of how long children remain in Youth Court custody. She recalled an adoption ceremony held soon after she became commissioner. A child help up a sign celebrating being adopted after 4,726 days in foster care. “We can’t leave kids in

custody for years.”

It’s expensive to keep children in foster care: the average cost is about \$40,000 a year per child in foster care, Sanders said.

Sanders said, “What I would really emphasize is that somehow we’ve got to figure out a way to either take the system we have and improve on the system or build a new system that doesn’t keep children in custody that long.”

“I am telling you what we have right now is not working particularly well across the state as a whole,” Sanders said.

The Commission was originally created by the Legislature in 1988 to study the state’s Youth Court system and make recommendations in 1989. The 2023 Legislature passed House Bill 1149, which reconstituted the 21-member commission for further study as part of its efforts to provide a clear path to permanency for neglected and abused children in the custody of the Mississippi Department of

Child Protection Services.

Others serving on the Commission are Tishomingo County Youth Court Referee Joey M. Cobb of Iuka, acting chairman of the Council of Youth Court Judges; Walthall County Youth Court Referee D. Ryan Bruhl of Columbia; Marion County Youth Court Referee Renee Porter of Columbia; DPS Assistant Deputy Commissioner Shonda Kirksey of Ellisville; DPS General Counsel Vicki Lowery of Jackson; Hattiesburg Police Chief Peggy Sealy; Harrison County Sheriff Troy Peterson; Will Crossley, President of Piney Woods School; former Hinds County Circuit Judge Joseph Sclafani of Clinton; Warren County Youth Court Prosecutor J. Lane Campbell of Vicksburg; and Jackson County Youth Court Prosecutor Michael Breland of Pascagoula.

The next Commission meeting is scheduled for 1 p.m. Oct. 20 in Room 204 at the Capitol.

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The Dickinsons have been foster parents for 10 children since 2016, some briefly, and some for most of the children's lives. Their first adopted son came into their foster care at 20 days old. The soon to be adopted 6-year-old was placed in foster care with the Dickinsons at 3 days old. After two years, two months and 11 days, the child was reunited with his biological family, but came back into the custody of the Department of Child Protection Services after about two years. "He came back to us on Mother's Day last year."

Judge Dickinson thinks of providing foster care as "a calling." He said, "It's our responsibility as human beings to minister to the orphans in our community, and my wife and I take that calling very seriously."

In 2015, as an attorney in private practice, he helped to recruit, train and help willing foster parents become licensed with the Department of Human Services. Training and licensing had been lengthy and unwieldy. Rescue 100 organized a concentrated week-end of classes that expedited the training, without shortcuts. The first weekend training was held in April 2016.

The focus in child welfare in recent years shifted from foster care to reunification with biological family. "The focus...has changed over the last several years to more of a 'we need to fix these families' instead of removing these kids out of their homes," he said. That includes providing services and resources to assist parents and families

in providing safe homes for their children.

There has been a decrease in the number of children in foster care. In August, there were 219 children in CPS custody in Harrison County. That compares to 792 Harrison County children in CPS custody in January 2019.

But, Judge Dickinson said, "There is always going to be a need for foster parents."

Children "all come in with some level of trauma. You rarely know about health or mental issues until you get to know the children," Judge Dickinson said. The soon-to-be-5-year-old was recently diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Some of his siblings have developmental issues, so the diagnosis was expected. He is one of the youngest of about a dozen siblings. Most wound up in foster care.

Judge Dickinson was elected in 2018 and took office as a Harrison County Court Judge handling all Youth Court matters in January 2019. He became a Trust Based Relational Intervention Practitioner through Texas Christian University in 2021, receiving specialized training to provide effective support and treatment for at-risk children. He was appointed in 2022 by the Mississippi Supreme Court to the Commission on Children's Justice. Earlier this year, he was appointed by the Supreme Court to the Mississippi Task Force on Foster Care and Adoption, which was created by the 2023 Legislature via Senate Bill 2384. He was also chosen this year to serve on the Judicial Leadership Council for National CASA/GAL.

## Judge Carlyn Hicks honored at juvenile justice symposium



**Hinds County Court Judge Carlyn Hicks, at left, receives the Chairman's Award from Dr. Alfred Martin, Chairman of the State Advisory Group on Juvenile Justice, on Aug. 10.**

Hinds County and Youth Court Judge Carlyn Hicks received the Chairman's Award at the 44th Mississippi Juvenile Justice Symposium on Aug. 10.

Dr. Alfred Martin, Chairman of the State Advisory Group on Juvenile Justice, said the award "recognizes a juvenile justice professional/advocate that has and continues to go beyond the role in which they serve. Judge Hicks' contribution to the theory/philosophy of juvenile justice and the service delivery system of juvenile justice has been exceptional." Martin said the award recognizes Judge Hicks "for her hands-on caring approach to reaching children. In the short time that she has been on the bench, she has worked tirelessly to reduce and resolve court

cases in Hinds County as well as introduce new courtroom practices that make sense."

The symposium, held Aug. 9-11 in Biloxi, focused on juvenile delinquency prevention. Judge Hicks was a panelist on coalition building and spoke about courtroom etiquette.

Judge Hicks also was a panelist at the Sept. 22 American Law Institute meeting at Columbia Law School regarding the soon to be released *Restatement of Children and the Law*. The *Restatement* addresses the legal regulation of children in families, in schools, in the juvenile justice system and as emerging adults.

Judge Hicks has served as Hinds County Court and Youth Court Judge since July 9, 2020.

## ICWA Conference introduces judges to peacemaker courts



Navajo Chief Justice Emeritus Robert Yazzie speaks on Aug. 9.

Participants at the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Indian Child Welfare Act Conference took a look into the workings of Native American peacemaking while getting an update on the requirements of ICWA.

Justice Robert Yazzie, Chief Justice Emeritus of the Navajo Nation, explained peacemaking as a problem-solving approach that brings all interested parties to the table to work toward “hozho,” a Navajo word for balance, harmony and peace.

“Hozho’ is a state of being in balance, harmony and peace. Hozho is an aspiration to always strive and restore peace, harmony, and balance in our lives. It’s the good way of life,” Yazzie explained.

Explaining the role of peacemaking and peacemaker courts, he said that a problem is recognized, then all of the willing parties come together to talk it

through. Identify the problem, then find a remedy to solve the problem, he explained.

“We look to the underlying cause of the problem. Better to understand the nature of the problem. Why? And come to a conclusion. What do we do?”

The process involves listening, and letting everyone have their say, talking through the problem to find an agreeable solution. The process is usually done with everyone gathered in a circle.

“In the adversarial Anglo court system, people are against each other and that creates more divide,” Yazzie said. In peacemaking, the goal is not to punish, but rather for people to be accountable to each other and accept responsibility. “Peacemaking is a good process. It brings people together. Peacemaking works when all parties are willing to be-

come part of the circle.”

“Listen, listen, listen,” he said. “Your problem is my problem. My problem is your problem.”

“If the problem is ignored, the imbalance will persist and cause more harm and disruption,” Yazzie said.

“The Voices of Peacemaking,” a video available online, gives perspectives of other tribes on peacemaking, which is deeply rooted in Native American tradition. “Peacemaking has been with us from time immemorial. It is an indigenous way of resolving disputes.... There is a spiritual connection, a collective wisdom,” said Judge Cheryl Demmert Fairbanks, a tribal appellate court justice and a professor of law who has taught at the University of New Mexico School of Law, the University of New Mexico’s Southwest Indian Law Clinic, Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon, and as adjunct faculty for the National Judicial College in Reno, Nevada.

“I do believe justice is a sacred thing,” said Chief Judge Michael Petoskey of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa Chippewa.

Tribal judges, peacemakers and elders from across the country give their perspectives on the half-hour video, which is available at this link: <https://vimeo.com/846089718/abb615a8cf>.

Additional information from the Aug. 9 ICWA Conference is linked from the conference agenda: <https://olemiss.app.box.com/s/y1guu36sofigbqr->

[gypkd9x1c2km1k59i](https://olemiss.app.box.com/s/y1guu36sofigbqr-).

The annual ICWA conference is hosted at Choctaw by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians in collaboration with the Mississippi Judicial College, the Mississippi Administrative Office of Courts and the state Department of Child Protection Services. The conference brings together state and tribal officials, judges, court staff, social workers and other professionals who deal with Native American children in a Youth Court setting to learn about the requirements of the Indian Child Welfare Act.

ICWA sets out federal requirements regarding removal and placement of Native American children in foster or adoptive homes. ICWA aims to preserve tribal culture and safeguard the rights of Native American children to their heritage.

Yazzie said, “The law is the Tribe must be given notice and be given the right to intervene in the case.” He said, “If the parents are unable to take care of a child, there is always somebody (among the Tribe.) When there is a removal, it is upon us to care for the children because they are a part of our clan....No one is going to take our place to teach our children about our culture, our values.”

The U.S. Supreme Court most recently interpreted the application of ICWA and affirmed its constitutionality in the June 15, 2023, decision of *Haaland v. Brackeen*, a case from Texas.

## Three state judges inducted as Fellows of Bar Foundation



**Justice Jimmy Maxwell**

Three state judges were inducted as Fellows of the Mississippi Bar Foundation on July 18 during the Bar Convention in Biloxi.

Newly inducted fellows are Mississippi Supreme Court Justice Jimmy Maxwell of Oxford, Hinds County Circuit Judge Faye Peterson of Jackson and Hancock County Court and Youth Court Judge S. Trent Favre of Kiln.

The Fellow designation is the Foundation's highest honor. Only 10 percent of the lawyers in Mississippi are eligible for membership as a fellow. Their selection is recognition by peers that the attorney has achieved the highest level of professionalism, competence and leadership. Fellows are selected for membership based not only on their excellence as a lawyer but also by their dedication and service to the public and profession.

Justice Maxwell has served as an appellate judge for 14 and one-half years — seven and one-half years on the Supreme Court and seven years on the Mississippi Court of Appeals. He was appointed



**Judge Faye Peterson**

ed by Gov. Phil Bryant to the Mississippi Supreme Court on Jan. 1, 2016, and was elected to an eight-year term in November 2016. Gov. Haley Barbour appointed him to the Mississippi Court of Appeals on Feb. 2, 2009. He was elected in 2010 and reelected in 2014.

Justice Maxwell earned his undergraduate degree and Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi. He practiced civil law in Jackson before returning to Oxford to serve as Assistant United States Attorney for the Northern District of Mississippi. He represented the U.S. Department of Justice in prosecutions and jury trials of public corruption, white collar fraud, money laundering, drug trafficking, immigration and gang-related crimes. He received various commendations from the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

He is a past president of the Young Lawyers Division of the Mississippi Bar, the Lafayette County Bar, and Tri-County



**Judge S. Trent Favre**

Young Lawyers. He also served on the Board of Bar Commissioners, the Mississippi Bar Foundation, the Diversity in the Law Committee, and the Board of Directors of the Mississippi Prosecutors Association. He is a graduate of Mississippi Economic Council's Leadership Mississippi and was named "Top 40 Under 40" by the *Mississippi Business Journal*.

Justice Maxwell frequently lectures on leadership, appellate and trial advocacy, legal writing, and Mississippi's judicial system. He has coached youth and middle school football and is an avid sportsman.

Judge Peterson was elected to the Hinds County Circuit Court in November 2018 and reelected in 2022. She began her judicial service on Jan. 1, 2019. The Supreme Court appointed her earlier this year to the Bar Complaint Tribunal.

She was the first African-American district attorney for the Seventh Circuit Court District of Hinds County. She served as Hinds County District

Attorney 2001–2007. She previously served as an assistant district attorney. While engaging in private law practice, she also served as a family master in Hinds Chancery Court 2009–2018.

She attended Jackson Public Schools and is a graduate of Callaway High School. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in physics from Jackson State University and a law degree from Mississippi College School of Law.

Judge Favre is the first jurist to sit on the bench for the County Court of Hancock County. He also serves as Youth Court judge. His appointment began Jan. 1, 2018, the date that the County Court became active. He has since been elected twice.

The Commission on Children's Justice honored him as one of its Champions for Children in 2019. The Mississippi Bar honored him with the 2020 Judicial Excellence Award. The Supreme Court appointed him to the Access to Justice Commission in 2021.

Judge Favre previously served as City Attorney for Bay St. Louis and was an assistant prosecutor for Bay St. Louis and the Hancock County Justice Court. He also represented Hancock Medical Center's Board of Trustees and the Hancock County E-911 Commission. He graduated *cum laude* from Millsaps College, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in philosophy with a minor in French. He received his Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law.

## Court appoints four new members to Access to Justice Commission



**Dan Hall**



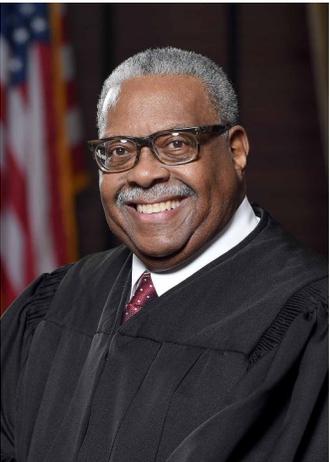
**Assistant Dean Mary Purvis**



**Judge Wes Ryals II**



**Catherine Servati**



**Presiding Justice Leslie King**



**Chancellor Denise Owens**



**Professor David Calder**

The Mississippi Supreme Court recently appointed four new members to the Access to Justice Commission and reappointed three members.

New members are Dan Hall of Madison, Mary Purvis of Jackson, Tunica County Justice Court Judge Richard W. "Wes" Ryals II of Tunica and Catherine Servati of Oxford. Reappointed to the Commission are Supreme Court Presiding Justice Leslie D. King of Greenville, retired Chancellor Denise Owens of Terry and Professor David Calder of Oxford.

Chief Justice Mike Randolph signed the appointments order on June 21.

The three-year terms will end June 30, 2026.

The Supreme Court created the Access to Justice Commission in June 2006. The Commission works to develop a unified strategy to improve access to justice in civil legal proceedings for the poor in Mississippi. The Commission is tasked with investigating the need for civil legal services to the poor and evaluating, developing and recommending policies to assist the judiciary in meeting needs for civil legal services to the poor.

Hall is a minister and president of On Course Solutions, LLC, a leadership development consulting company. He has

worked with churches, non-profits, government agencies and the financial sector. His work has included consultation and leadership in church revitalization, racial reconciliation, international humanitarian aid and business ventures, and mentoring business leaders. He is a founding member of the Executive Board of Mission Mississippi. He served as president of the Southern Baptist Convention Large Church Roundtable. He served in executive leadership positions with the Jackson Police Department Chaplaincy, the Jackson Youth Initiative, the Berry Institute, the Strategic Cultural Initiative, Father's

Heart Ministries, Operation Barnabas and the Hope Science Institute. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Baylor University and a Master of Business Administration from Belhaven University. He holds certifications in executive leadership from Cornell University and in mediation from Sullivan University. He attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

Purvis is the Assistant Dean and Director of Legal Analysis and Communication at Mississippi College School of Law. She previously served as the executive director of CASA, Court Appointed Special Advocates Mississippi. She serves on the Mississippi College School of Law Child Advocacy Advisory Board and the Child Welfare and Advocacy Committee of the Mississippi Bar. She previously served on the Board of Directors of the Mississippi Women Lawyers Association, as chair of the Bar Admissions Ceremony Committee of the Young Lawyers Division of the Mississippi

*Continued on page 15*

Bar, and on the Board of Directors for Operation Shoestring, the Mississippi Children's Museum and Junior League of Jackson. She graduated *magna cum laude* from Millsaps College, and earned her Juris Doctor, *summa cum laude*, from Mississippi College School of Law.

Ryals has served as a Justice Court Judge since 2015, and has been attorney for the town of Tunica since 2020. He previously served as a municipal public defender and attorney for the Tunica County Airport Commission. His private practice includes family law, disability law, personal injury law and criminal defense. He earned a Bachelor of Business Administration from Mississippi State University and a Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law.

Servati serves as a law clerk for U.S. Magistrate Judge David Sanders of the Northern District of Mississippi. She previously served in the same position for U.S. Magistrate Judge Roy Percy. She also was an adjunct professor of legal research at the University of Mississippi School of Law. Before joining the staff of the federal judiciary, she practiced law with the firm of Webb Sanders & Williams in Tupelo. She earned a Bachelor of Arts, *magna cum laude*, in English from the University of Mississippi and a Juris Doctor, *magna cum laude*, from the University of Mississippi School of Law.

Presiding Justice King has served as an appellate judge for more than 28 years. He has served on the Mississippi Supreme Court since 2011. He was

an original member of the Mississippi Court of Appeals, having been elected after the Court was founded in 1994, and beginning his service in 1995. He was Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals from April 30, 2004, through March 1, 2011, when he began his service on the Supreme Court. He served in the Mississippi House of Representatives 1980 - 1994. He was chairman of the Mississippi Black Legislative Caucus, and served as vice-chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee and the Conservation and Water Resources Committee. In his early career, he was Youth Court counselor for Washington County, public defender, Youth Court prosecutor, and Municipal Court Judge for the Town of Metcalfe. He graduated from the University of Mississippi and earned a law degree from Texas Southern University School of Law.

Judge Owens served as co-chair of the Access to Justice Commission for 10 years. She has worked to improve access to justice since she was a law student at George Washington University. She worked for two years as a law clerk at a Washington, D.C., Legal Services elder law clinic. Her first job after she was admitted to the Bar was as a staff attorney for Legal Services in Jackson. When she was elected to the Hinds Chancery Court bench in 1989, she was one of the first two African-American women chancellors elected in the state. She served as chair of the Conference of Chancery Judges 2000-2001. She recently served as president of the Ameri-

can College of Business Court Judges. She was the 2016 recipient of the Susie Blue Buchanan Award, an annual award presented by the Mississippi Bar's Women in the Profession Committee to an outstanding woman lawyer who has achieved professional excellence and has actively paved the way to success for other women lawyers. She retired from the chancery bench in December 2022. She is a graduate of Tougaloo College and George Washington University School of Law.

Calder is a clinical professor of law and director of the Child Advocacy

Clinic at the University of Mississippi School of Law. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in religious studies from Mississippi College and a Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law. He served as law clerk for U.S. Magistrate Judge Jerry A. Davis before entering private practice. He directed the Fair Housing Clinical Program at the University of Mississippi School of Law from 1994 to 1996, and he served as a part-time visiting clinical professor in the Civil Legal Clinic before becoming a full-time faculty member.

## Burrow reappointed to Ethics Commission



**Stephen Burrow**

Chief Justice Mike Randolph reappointed attorney Stephen W. Burrow of Pascagoula to the Mississippi Ethics Commission.

The four-year term will begin on Nov. 15. Burrow was first appointed to the Commission in November 2019.

Burrow is a shareholder in the Pascagoula firm of Heidelberg Steinberger Burrow & Armer, PA. His practice areas are business law, business development, commercial transactions, business and com-

mercial litigation and medical malpractice defense. He has practiced law since 1993.

He served as a Pascagoula City Councilman and Mayor *Pro Tem* from 2017 to 2021. From 2007-2016, he served as Pascagoula Municipal Court Judge *Pro Tem*.

The Secretary of State appointed him to three study committees which made recommendations for legislative revisions to business regulations. From 2008-2009, Burrow served on the LLC/Partnership Committee, charged by Mississippi's Secretary of State with updating and substantially revising the state's statutory regime for limited liability companies and partnerships. In May 2010, the Secretary of State appointed Burrow as vice-chairman for the Corporation Laws Study Group. The Secretary of State appointed Burrow in 2013 to the Business Organizations Study Group.

## Supreme Court appoints four new members to Complaint Tribunal



**Judge Faye Peterson**

The Supreme Court has appointed four new members to the Bar Complaint Tribunal, and reappointed three members.

Judge Faye Peterson of Jackson was appointed to the Complaint Tribunal on June 5 to serve out the term of the late Hinds County Court Judge LaRita Cooper-Stokes. The term is through Dec. 31.

New appointees whose terms began Sept. 1 are Circuit Judge Carol White-Richard of Greenville, Workers Compensation Commission Administrative Law Judge Jennifer F. Nicaud of Pass Christian and attorney Leo J. Carmody of Oxford.

Presiding Justice Jim Kitchens, on behalf of the unanimous Supreme Court, issued an order on Aug. 24 appointing the new members and reappointing Tribunal members Circuit Judge Claiborne “Buddy” McDonald IV of Picayune and attorneys George Philip Schrader IV of Vicksburg and J. Rhea Tannehill Jr. of Oxford.

The Court thanked outgoing Tribunal members Circuit Judge Steve S. Ratcliff III of Madison and attorneys Gina B. Tomp-



**Judge Carol White-Richard**

kins of Biloxi and Taylor A. Heck of Senatobia “for their faithful services as members of the Complaint Tribunal.”

Members of the Complaint Tribunal hear and decide disciplinary matters arising from complaints against attorneys. Discipline may range from private reprimand to disbarment. Decisions from the Complaint Tribunal may be appealed to the Mississippi Supreme Court. Actions by the Complaint Tribunal are final if not appealed.

The 27-member Complaint Tribunal is made up of nine judges and 18 lawyers selected by the nine members of the Supreme Court from three Supreme Court districts. The Complaint Tribunal sits in panels of three, with each panel comprised of two attorneys and one judge.

Judge Peterson was elected to the Hinds County Circuit Court in November 2018 and reelected in 2022. She began her judicial service on Jan. 1, 2019. She was named a Fellow of the Mississippi Bar Foundation in July.

She served as Hinds County District Attorney



**Judge Jennifer F. Nicaud**

2001–2007 after working as an assistant district attorney. While engaging in private law practice, she also served as a family master in Hinds Chancery Court 2009-2018. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in physics from Jackson State University and a law degree from Mississippi College School of Law.

Judge White-Richard has served on the Fourth Circuit Court since January 2015. The district includes Leflore, Sunflower and Washington counties. Before her election to the bench, she served as an assistant district attorney and was a criminal defense attorney in private practice. She is past president of the Mississippi Public Defenders Association. She is a Fellow of the Mississippi Bar Foundation. She graduated from Tulane University with a double major in English and communications. She earned a law degree from Vanderbilt School of Law.

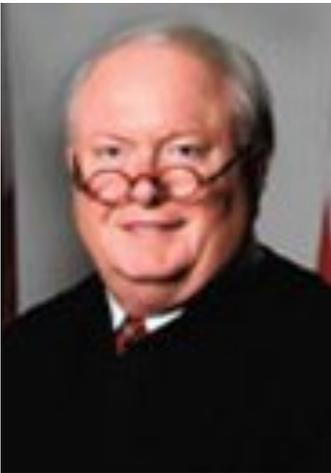
Judge Nicaud has served as a Workers Compensation Commission Administrative Law Judge since 2021. She served on the Board of the National As-



**Leo J. Carmody**

sociation of Workers Compensation Judiciary. She previously served as a Municipal Judge Pro Temp for the City of Pass Christian. She is an adjunct professor at Mississippi College School of Law. She is chair of the Professionalism Committee of the Mississippi Bar and a member of the Access to Justice Committee and the Women in the Profession Section of the Bar. She was President of the Russell, Walker, Blass American Inn of Court, and on the Board of the American Inn of Court. She is chair of the Federal Rules and Procedure Section of the National Litigation Board and a board member of the ADR Board of the National Federal Bar Association. She serves on the boards of the Boys’ and Girls’ Clubs, the Walter Anderson Museum, the Ohr-O’Keefe Museum, the Pass Christian School Foundation and Kid’s Chance of Mississippi.

Judge Nicaud earned an undergraduate degree from Tulane University and her Juris Doctorate from Tulane Law School. She is certified in mediation by Harvard Law School and



**Judge Claiborne McDonald**

the University of Mississippi. She is admitted to practice law in Mississippi, Louisiana and Florida.

Carmody practices with the law firm of Upchurch & Upchurch, P.A., in Oxford. His practice focuses on medical malpractice defense. He is a member of the Mississippi Defense Lawyers Association Editorial Board, the Mississippi Bar, the Lafayette County Bar Association and Tri-County Young Lawyers. He is admitted to practice before all Mississippi courts, the U.S. District Courts for the Northern and Southern Districts of Mississippi, the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals and the Sixth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. He served on the Board of Directors of United Way of Oxford-Lafayette County. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. He earned a Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law.

Judge McDonald has served as Circuit Judge of the 15<sup>th</sup> District since January 2016. He previously served for seven years as district attorney for the 15th District, and 16 years as an assistant district at-



**George Philip Schrader IV**

torney. He also previously served as Pearl River County prosecuting attorney, city attorney and municipal judge in Picayune. He was in private practice in Pearl River County 1973-1984 and 2006-2015. He was among six judges honored at the Mississippi Bar Convention in July for reaching the milestone of 50 years as a lawyer.

Judge McDonald served as a member of the Supreme Court Advisory Committee on Criminal Rules of Practice and Procedure, the Mississippi Legislative Advisory Committee on Redrafting the Mississippi Criminal Code and the Legislative Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice. He is a Fellow of the Mississippi Bar Foundation and was a Commissioner of the Mississippi Bar and President of the Pearl River County Bar Association. He served on the State Board of Law Enforcement Standards and Training, was president of the Mississippi Prosecutors Association and was on the Board of Directors of the National District Attorneys Association.

Judge McDonald earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science from



**J. Rhea Tannehill Jr.**

Mississippi State University and a law degree from the University of Alabama School of Law. He did post-graduate work in criminal justice at the University of Southern Mississippi.

Schrader practices law with the firm of Teller, Hopson & Schrader in Vicksburg. His practice areas include personal injury, family law, real estate, criminal defense, civil appeals and workers compensation. He is admitted to practice before all Mississippi courts and the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting from the University of Southern Mississippi and a Juris Doctorate, *cum laude*, from Mississippi College School of Law.

Tannehill practices law in Oxford. His practice includes personal injury, criminal defense, collections, real estate, estate planning and probate. He has served as Municipal Court Judge of Sardis since 2007.

Tannehill serves on the Mississippi Bar's Ethics Committee. He previously served for five years on the Professional Responsibility Committee, including a

year as chairman. He also served on the Board of Bar Commissioner's Committee on Character and Fitness for 12 years. He served as President of Lafayette County Bar, the Tri-County Bar Associations and the Young Lawyers Division of the Mississippi Bar. He was a Commissioner of the Mississippi Bar and a member of the Bar's Executive Committee. He is a Fellow of the Mississippi Bar Foundation.

He grew up in Union, where he worked for his parents' weekly newspaper, the *Union Appeal*. He earned a Bachelor's Degree in public administration, a Master's Degree in education and a Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi. As an undergraduate, he served as President of the Associated Student Body.

He served for 28 years in the Mississippi Army National Guard, retiring at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. In 1999, he was commissioned as First Lieutenant in the Judge Advocate Generals' Corps. He mobilized with the Mississippi Army National Guard in 2005 after Hurricane Katrina for almost two months, doing disaster relief and cleanup. He was deployed to Afghanistan for 13 months. He was awarded the Bronze Star, Combat Action Badge, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Overseas Service Ribbon and Global War on Terrorism Medal. He most recently served as Military Judge for the Mississippi Military, where he heard courts-martials and presided over administrative hearings regarding National Guard soldiers.

# Mississippi Court Reporters Association elects new officers



**Officers of the Mississippi Court Reporters Association, elected on April 27 at the Mississippi Court Reporters Association Conference, are, front row, left to right, Phyllis McLarty of Mantachie, immediate past president; Melissa Grimes of Calhoun City, president; Brenda Blackburn of Hollandale, president-elect; Candace O’Barr Jones of Jackson, vice-president; Mandy Vanlandingham of Clinton, secretary; and Candice Crane of Brandon, treasurer. Back row, left to right, are directors Maggie Fair of Oxford, Zone 1; Leigh Pettit of Starkville, Zone 2; Miranda Schoggen of Brandon, Zone 3; and at large director Melanie Owen of Pontotoc. Not pictured are directors Ruth Ann Patrick of Meridian and Amy Little of Hattiesburg.**

Mississippi Court Reporters Association. Brenda Blackburn of Hollandale is president-elect of the Association. Candace O’Barr Jones of Jackson is vice-president, Amanda Vanlandingham of Clinton is secretary and Candice Crane of Brandon is treasurer.

New MCRA officers were sworn in during the Mississippi Court Reporters Spring Conference in Biloxi.

Zone directors for the Court Reporters Association are Maggie Fair of Oxford, Zone 1 director; Leigh Pettit of Starkville, Zone 2 director; Miranda Schoggen of Brandon, Zone 3 director; Ruth Ann Patrick of Meridian, Zone 4 director; Melanie Owen of Pontotoc, director at large; and Amy Little of Hattiesburg, director at

large.

Grimes is a court reporter for the 14th Chancery Court. Blackburn is a court reporter for the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Mississippi. Jones is a freelance court reporter at eDeposition. Vanlandingham is a court reporter for the 11<sup>th</sup> Chancery Court District. Crane is a court reporter for the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi. Fair works for the Third Circuit Court; Pettit, for the 14<sup>th</sup> Chancery; Schoggen, for the 20<sup>th</sup> Chancery District; Patrick, for the 10<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court District; Owen, for the First Circuit Court; and Little, for the Lamar County Court and Youth Court.

Phyllis McLarty of Mantachie is immediate past president. McLarty is a court reporter for the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Mississippi.



**Twila Jordan-Hoover, at right, was honored at the April Mississippi Court Reporters Conference. Jordan-Hoover is pictured with newly elected Mississippi Court Reporters Association President Melissa Grimes**

Court reporter Twila Jordan-Hoover of Carriere was recognized during the April Mississippi Court

Reporters Conference for her work to train more court reporters.

*Continued on page 19*

# Municipal Court Judges Association elects officers for 2023-2024



Officers of the Mississippi Municipal Court Judges Association are, left to right, Bill Halford, Jr., Board of Governors Representative; Judge Hal Neilson, President; Judge Robert D. Jones, Vice-President; and Judge Wes Curry, Secretary Treasurer.

Oxford Municipal Judge Hal Neilson was elected president of the Mississippi Municipal Court Judges Association during the summer training conference in Biloxi.

Judge Robert D. Jones was elected vice-president. He serves as Municipal Judge in Scooba, DeKalb, Stonewall and Enterprise.

Hattiesburg Municipal Judge Wes Curry was elected Association secretary treasurer.

Meadville Municipal Judge Bill Halford Jr. continues his role as a member of the Board of Governors of the Mississippi Judicial College. The Judicial College provides continuing legal judicial education and training for state trial and appellate court judges, youth court judges and referees, municipal judges, justice court judges, court administrators, court clerks and court reporters.

Tylertown Municipal Judge Ryan Bruhl is immediate past president of the Association.

Judge Hal Neilson of Oxford, at left, presents to Judge Ryan Bruhl of Tylertown a plaque in recognition of his service as Association president.

## Continued from Page 18

The Mississippi Court Reporters Association presented Jordan-Hoover with the Kay Ferguson Award, its highest honor, on April 27 during the Mississippi Court Reporters Association Conference in Biloxi.

Prompted by the continuing shortage of certified court reporters, Jordan-Hoover spearheaded efforts to form a stenographic court reporter training program on the Hattiesburg campus of Pearl River Community College. She is one of several court reporters who teach and mentor students in the program.

Jordan-Hoover was recognized for “exemplary leadership and selfless acts of time and dedication.”

She is former president of the Mississippi Court Reporters Association. She has been a court reporter for almost 17 years. She is a court reporter for the 10<sup>th</sup> Chancery District.



## Lumley appointed to Board of Certified Court Reporters

Freelance court reporter Theresa Lumley of Wesson was recently appointed to the Board of Certified Court Reporters.

The Mississippi Court Reporters Association nominated Lumley, who has been a court reporter for 28 years. Chief Justice Mike Randolph signed the appointment order on May 26 on behalf of the unanimous Court.

Justices reappointed as Board members Circuit Judge David H. Strong of McComb, Court Reporter Huey Bang of Pass Christian and attorney Jerry D. Sharp of Laurel. All Board terms extend through June 30, 2025.

The Board oversees licensing of court reporters and granting of temporary permission to noncertified and nonresident reporters.



## Retired Supreme Court Justice Kay Cobb died on May 26



Former Justice Kay Cobb listens to a speaker at her portrait presentation on Sept. 6, 2018, at the Supreme Court.

Retired Mississippi Supreme Court Presiding Justice Kay B. Cobb died on May 26 at her home in Lenoir City, Tenn. She was 81.

Justice Cobb was a trailblazer for women in the legal profession. She was the second woman to serve on the Mississippi Supreme Court, serving from 1999 until 2007.

Chancellor Vicki Cobb Daniels of Batesville, Cobb's sister-in-law, said, "I was always so proud of her because she paved the way for the rest of us. She set a tremendous example for other women to follow."

Colleagues recalled her as an extremely hard working jurist who gave thorough analysis and meticulous attention to detail in every case.

Former Supreme Court Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. of Jackson was a law school classmate and a colleague. He said, "She was fearlessly inde-

pendent. I have always been impressed with her determination and work ethic, exemplified by her entering law school with two young daughters at home." On the Court, "I don't think anyone worked harder in the pursuit of the correct result for her cases. Her conduct always demonstrated moral and character strength and the best interests of the Judiciary."

Former Presiding Justice George C. Carlson of Batesville recalled Justice Cobb from her time in private law practice, and they served together on the Supreme Court. "When I was a Circuit Judge, she occasionally appeared before me as an attorney. She prepared meticulously for her cases, and she had that same work ethic as a justice. At the Supreme Court, our offices were next to each other, and quite often, when I left the office for the day, she was still in her office working.

She was a wonderful person and an exceptional justice."

Court of Appeals Chief Judge Donna Barnes of Tupelo gave a tribute to Justice Cobb during the Price-Prather luncheon on July 19 at the Mississippi Bar Convention.

Chief Judge Barnes noted that Justice Cobb's 2003 written interview with the legal blog *How Appealing* captured the essence of her life and work "in her own neat, concise writing style."

Asked why she chose law school 12 years after earning an undergraduate degree, Justice Cobb replied, "My life was fairly predictable for a woman in my generation, until that fateful decision was made: graduated from college; married a great guy I met during college; traveled with him to far away places where he served as an AF fighter pilot; gave birth to two beautiful daughters; and was a stay-at-home mom. His tour of combat duty over North Vietnam was a wake-up call for both of us. We both learned the importance of politics and the need for good citizens to take an active role, even if only in some small way, in the improvement and preservation of our great nation. It was at that point that we decided that knowledge of the law would provide a solid foundation on which to build our future, so we returned to our native Mississippi, and I enrolled in the University of Mississippi School of Law in 1975."

Chief Judge Barnes said that Justice Cobb "opened the doors for us women in the following generations, boomers, gen-Xers and millennials and whoever

comes after that. We owe a great deal to Justice Cobb as Mississippians and as women lawyers."

In 2007, Justice Cobb was honored with the Susie Blue Buchanan Award, presented by the Women in the Profession Section of the Mississippi Bar. The award is presented annually to "an outstanding woman in the profession who has achieved professional excellence and has actively paved the way to success for other women lawyers."

She began private practice in Oxford in 1978. In November 1982, she became Director of Prosecutor Programs at the Mississippi Prosecutors College at the University of Mississippi School of Law. She served as senior attorney for the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics from December 1984 to June 1988. She became a special assistant attorney general and established a North Mississippi regional office in 1988. She served as state coordinator for the State Wide Education, Enforcement and Prevention System, working on drug education and prevention. She served on the President's Commission on Model State Drug Laws and the National Alliance for Model State Drug Laws.

Justice Cobb in interviews said that when one door closed, another opened to a new opportunity. In the *How Appealing* interview, she said, "The various turns in my career were actually never planned, but occurred as the result of being in the right place at the right time to fill a need and provide a service."

Her first elective office was Mississippi Senator for District 9, representing Calhoun, Lafayette and Yalobusha counties, January 1992 to January 1996.

Reflecting on that legislative

*Continued on page 21*

service in the 2003 interview, Justice Cobb said, "I stood up for what I discerned was right and best for our entire state, and did not bow to special interest groups, or to powerful local interest groups (which ultimately led to my defeat as senator)."

Justice Cobb most admired Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman on the U.S. Supreme Court, for her "clear and well-reasoned writing; balanced approach to issues; insightful questions at oral argument; judicial restraint; more concerned about reaching the right result than about controversial theories of jurisprudence; strong belief in our federal system of government and respect for the role of the states; moderate to conservative viewpoint; practical application of the law." Both were breast cancer survivors, worked on cattle ranches, had long marriages with children, and served in all three branches of government. The entire interview is at <https://howappealing.abovethelaw.com/20q/2003040120q-appellateblog/archive/>.

Gov. Kirk Fordice appointed Justice Cobb to the Supreme Court on April 1, 1999. Fordice had Cobb on his short list as a possible appointee to a vacancy on the Court of Appeals, but when Justice James L. Roberts Jr. resigned from the state's highest court to run for Governor, Fordice appointed Cobb to the high court. Justice Cobb was elected in 2000 to a full term. She served for eight years, retiring on May 1, 2007. She was a Presiding Justice at the time of her retirement.

At the Sept. 6, 2018, ceremony in which Justice Cobb formally presented her portrait to

## Pontotoc to observe Fred Wicker Day Nov. 10



**Judge Fred Wicker**

The Pontotoc Rotary Club and Pontotoc County Chamber of Commerce will observe Judge Fred Wicker Day on Nov. 10 with a dinner program at 6 p.m. at First Baptist Church Fellowship Hall in Pontotoc.

U.S. Senator Roger

Wicker will be the guest speaker, honoring his late father. The Rotary Club will commemorate Judge Wicker's 75 years as a Rotarian.

Proceeds from the \$40 per ticket event will benefit students. The program is open to non-Rotarians.

Judge Wicker died Oct. 21, 2022. He was 98.

He practiced law in Pontotoc and was elected to public office for the first time in 1951 as Pontotoc County Prosecuting Attorney. He was attorney for the city of Pontotoc 1957-1965. He served in the Mississippi Senate for three years before being appointed by Gov. John Bell Williams as Circuit Judge for the First Judicial

District in 1970. He served in that seat for 20 years, retiring in 1990.

Thomas Frederick Wicker was born April 7, 1924, in Hickory Flat. He grew up in Benton County and graduated at 16 from Hickory Flat High School, where he served as senior class president. He attended Holmes Junior College on an athletic scholarship. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1943 and served in England, France, Germany, Belgium, and Luxembourg, earning four battle stars. He resumed courses at Holmes, graduating in 1946. He earned his LLB from the University of Mississippi School of Law in 1948, serving as president of his class.

the Supreme Court, Chief Justice Waller noted that Justice Cobb authored 211 majority opinions. Her best known case is probably the Feb. 19, 2004, decision she authored in *Janssen Pharmaceutica v. Armond*, which reformed joinder and venue in civil litigation.

After the accolades, Justice Cobb told the crowd at the portrait ceremony, "I'm almost speechless. I'm humbled. God has given me a lot of help through the years. I didn't do it alone." She thanked all those who touched her career and her life. "I want to say thank you... for helping me make a happy life, a productive life, and I hope that I can pass it along to my family."

Judge Daniels said, "She had such a life of service to her family, the community and the legal profession." Reflecting on Justice Cobb's diverse work and life experiences, she said, "She could handle working cows. She sat on the Su-

preme Court and was such a lady."

Kay Beevers Cobb was born Feb. 28, 1942, in Quitman County and grew up on a farm in Cleveland. She was valedictorian of her Cleveland High School graduating class and class president at Mississippi University for Women, where she graduated in 1963. Years later, she served as president of the MUW Alumnae Board and chair of the Inter-Alumni Council for State Institutions of Higher Learning. She received the MUW Medal of Excellence in 1990.

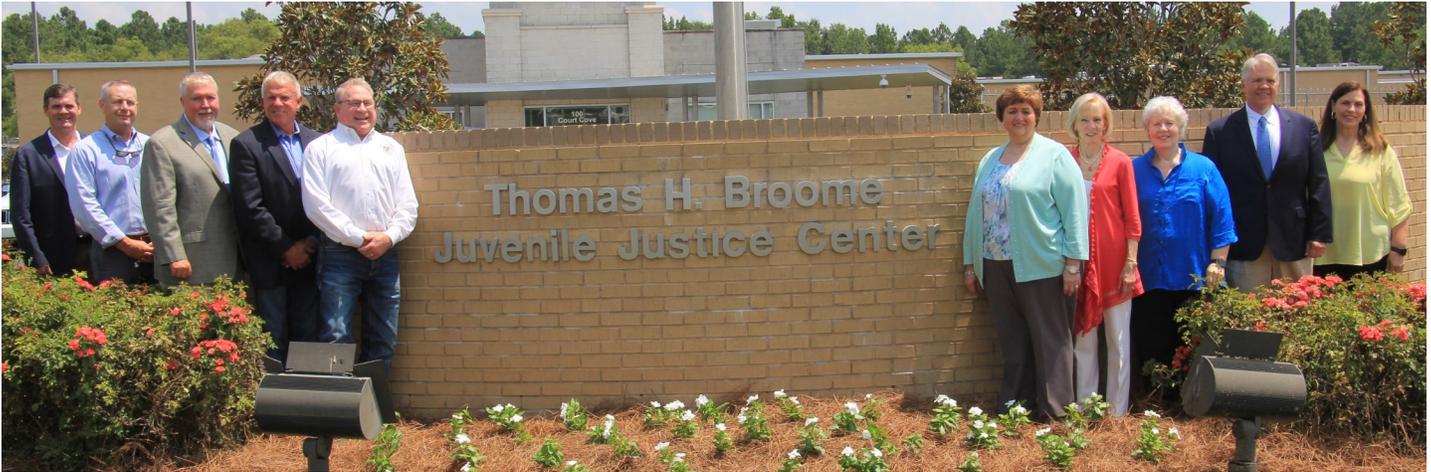
She taught elementary school for three years to military personnel's children while her husband, Larry Cobb, was stationed with the U.S. Air Force in Japan. She was a job placement counselor for the Texas Employment Commission for five years, helping people with physical handicaps and those recently released from prison in efforts to find employment.

From law school until a few years after she retired from the Supreme Court, Oxford was home. She taught Sunday School in Oxford to toddlers, who knew her simply as "Miss Kay."

She was known for her coconut cake, cherry cheesecake, pecan pie and homemade ice cream.

Her family in her obituary said, "Eventually, she lost her spoken words to Alzheimer's, so conversation, which she loved so much, became more difficult. But she loved to be right in the mix of life, watching and listening to everything going on around her...and she had such a twinkle in her eye and vivid facial expressions, that those of us who knew her best could tell exactly what she was thinking. She was a woman of light and of love, compassion and service, encouragement, contentment, and grace."

## Juvenile facility renamed in honor of Judge Thomas Broome



The Rankin County Board of Supervisors, at left, and Judge Thomas Broome's family, at right, stand by a new sign outside the Thomas H. Broome Juvenile Justice Center on July 28. Board members are, left to right, Brad Calhoun, Daniel Cross, Jay Bishop, Jared Morrison and Steve Gaines. Judge Broome's family, on the right side of the sign, are his wife Paula Broome and siblings Barbara Broome Collier, Patricia Broome White, Adam H. Broome and Julia Broome Stillely.



**Judge Thomas H. Broome**

Rankin County authorities on July 28 honored the legacy of the late County Court and Youth Court Judge Thomas H. Broome, announcing that the building where he worked to protect the lives and well-being of children now bears his name.

The Rankin County Board of Supervisors on July 14 adopted a resolution changing the name of the Rankin County Juvenile Justice Center in Pelahatchie to the Thomas H. Broome Juvenile Justice Center. On July 28, the Board, Judge Broome's family, judges, court staff, law enforcement and

friends packed the courtroom to honor the life and service of Judge Broome. Paula Broome, Judge Broome's wife, unveiled a portrait in the courtroom.

Judge Broome died on May 21. He was 57.

The programs which Judge Broome developed and the resources which he made available to Rankin County children during his 20 years as Youth Court judge are a model unmatched in the state, said Rankin County Court Judge David Morrow and retired County Court Judge Kent McDaniel. Judge Broome was an innovator who constantly looked for ways to better serve the children who came under his care.

"They are available to you and your children and your grandchildren because of what Tom Broome has done," Judge Morrow told those attending the ceremony.

The Rankin County Board of Supervisors in its resolution honoring the life and service of Judge Broome said his "incredibly profound legacy will be felt

for generations." The Board said, "Judge Broome was a genuinely kind man who loved people and sought their greater good. Tom loved his fellow public servants, the youth court staff, and Tom loved his role as a steadfast protector of the disadvantaged and troubled youth of Rankin County. Tom was full of compassion for the less fortunate and he made time, day or night, for anyone who required his help. Tom's larger than life presence, personality, leadership ability, legal acumen and love for people will be greatly missed."

Board Attorney Craig Slay noted that Judge Broome had a talent for finding federal funds and grants to help pay for some of the innovative programs that benefitted Rankin County children and families. That was music to the ears of the Board of Supervisors.

Judge Broome founded the Rankin County Juvenile Drug Court in 2006, and he started one of the state's two earliest family

drug court programs in 2010. He established a Safe Babies Court Team for Rankin County in July 2015 - the second in the state. He implemented the state's second Zero to Three program, giving intensive services to children from birth to age 3. He helped lead a movement to provide legal representation to parents in youth court. When the program started in 2012, one county in the state paid for lawyers to represent indigent parents in Youth Court; today about 40 percent of the counties provide some level of representation.

Clifford, a mixbreed former shelter dog, stood in the courtroom before the ceremony began. Judge Broome used therapy dogs to comfort the children.

Judge Broome was instrumental in building the facility that now bears his name. The court moved into the facility in 2011.

Judge Morrow said, "Tom Broome breathed life into this building, every fiber of this building." Gesturing to the Youth Court staff standing facing

the audience, he said, “His heart still beats today through the staff....This is the heartbeat of the Rankin County Youth Court, and it all comes from Tom Broome.”

Youth Court Administrator Julie Thompson said, “We had some hard days out here without him. He was our family and we love him. He’s still here. He has taught his staff well. We will continue to work every day making sure the children of Rankin County are OK.”

Resident Jurist John Hudson of Natchez said Judge Broome “loved the families and children that he served and always sought to do right by them.” He worked to deliver justice for all who came before him. He was the embodiment of Micah 6:8: “and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

He also worked to improve the juvenile justice system across the state and at the national level, Judge Hudson said. He helped develop a risk assessment instrument to assist those in charge of juvenile detention in determining who had to be detained, and who should not be.

He was chairman of the Mississippi Council of Youth Court Judges for 12 years, and was co-chair of the Supreme Court’s Commission on Children’s Justice since its inception in 2006. He served as a board member and later as secretary to the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

He was a regular visitor to the Legislature, pushing for changes that would benefit children. “So much



**Judge Thomas Broome’s wife, Paula Broome, second from right, unveils his portrait in the courtroom as his sisters and brother look on during a July 28 ceremony.**

of the progress that has been made has been because of his hard work,” Judge Hudson said.

“Tom was my best friend and when I think of him now, joy comes to me always,” Judge Hudson said. “He would always lift my spirits.”

Judge Broome’s self-deprecating humor lightened a room or broke tension. He once quipped about his power as a judge, saying “Everyone knows that I carry more weight than any other judge in Mississippi.” For those who never met him, Judge Broome was a big man.

Judges Broome and Hudson always bantered over the Mississippi State-Ole Miss rivalry. Judge Broome graduated with highest honors from Mississippi State University with a degree in mechanical engineering before earning a law degree from Mississippi College School of Law. Judge Hudson, a University of Mississippi Law graduate, made an extreme concession at the ceremony, hoisting and clanging a cowbell. Then he put it down with a gesture like

he had touched something unpleasant.

All who spoke at the ceremony agreed that renaming the building was the best possible way to honor Judge Broome – and that he would have disapproved. He did not seek accolades or honors. But he would have loved the fellowship of the gathering and a shared meal. The Rankin County Bar Association spread a barbecue lunch afterwards.

Colleagues were devastated by his death. Hinds County Youth Court Judge Carlyn Hicks said shortly after he died, “I have searched for the words, and there are not words adequate enough, extensive enough, or worthy enough to express what a tremendous loss to the judiciary Judge Broome’s passing brings. Judge Broome was a brilliant legal mind, systems change agent and incomparable jurist whose impact has been felt in jurisdictions across this nation. He left an indelible mark on all of our youth court jurisprudence through his guidance, wisdom, and mentorship.”

At a June 10 celebration of Judge Broome’s life, Judge Hicks said that those who work with children and families must strive to continue his legacy of service. He was a mentor and friend to the judges who share responsibility for the well-being of children. Although Judge Broome had no biological children, he treated youngsters who came before his court as his own.

Supreme Court Justice Dawn Beam served as a co-chair of the Commission on Children’s Justice with Judge Broome. She said, “He was at the forefront of juvenile justice reform, leading his own county to develop a premier detention facility while always working a phone call away to advise other youth court judges of options to help troubled youth.”

Former Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. said that Judge Broome’s life’s work was making a difference for children. He had deep compassion, and was known to pay out of his own pocket for food, clothing and other needs. “He never gave up. He gave it everything.”

## Retired Chancellor George Warner died September 16

Retired Chancellor George D. Warner Jr. of Meridian was remembered for his quick decisions, love of the outdoors and zest for life. He died on Sept. 16 at Brookdale Senior Living community. He was 93.

A funeral service was held on Sept. 23. He was interred at Forest Lawn Memory Gardens in Meridian.

Judge Warner served as Chancellor of the 12<sup>th</sup> Chancery District of Clarke and Lauderdale counties 1982-1994. He was known for making immediate rulings from the bench.

His family said in his obituary, "He once fined himself for leaving town on a fishing trip when a hearing was scheduled in his court. Many recall his unconventional style as a jurist."

Unconventional style made Judge Warner something of a local legend. He told some of the stories, with excerpts from his opinions, in a book titled *Through the Eyes of a Judge*.

Local lawyers had a term for this: getting "Warnerized," retired Chancellor Larry Primeaux recalled in a Nov. 30, 2012, post to his "The Better Chancery Practice Blog." Several posts include choice excerpts.

"One example is the case where he denied the parties a divorce and found that they had come to an 'exact tie' on the *Albright* factors, leaving the parties in *status quo ante* but poorer for their attorney's fees. Another example is the divorce case where he

ordered the sheriff to take possession of the parties' 26 chickens, and to pluck, gut, clean and freeze them, and then to give each party 13. I never heard whether the sheriff did all that himself or got someone else to do it. Judge Warner also ordered a bailiff in a child-support contempt case to go to a man's farm and shoot his registered quarter horse to free up the money that the man claimed he was spending on feed. The man relented and the judge granted a reprieve."

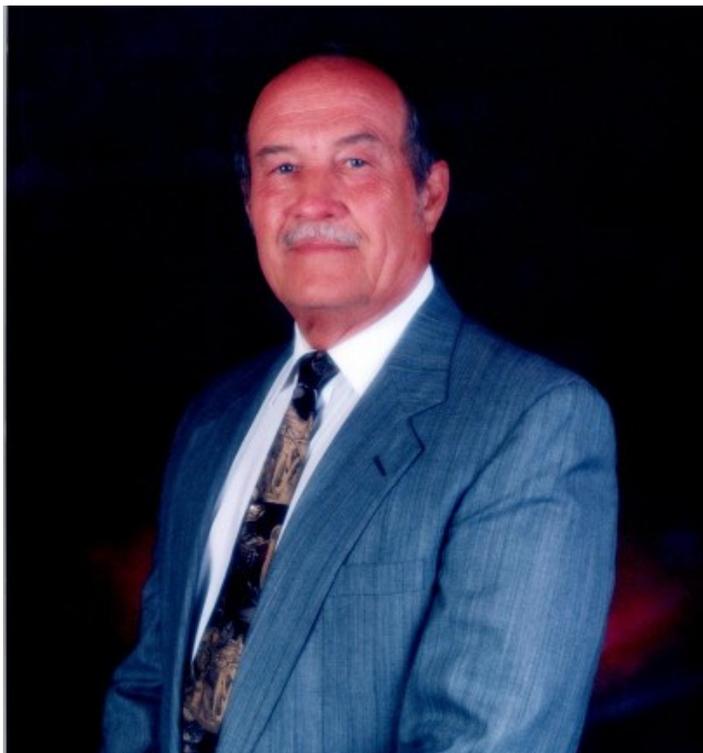
In a case in which a juvenile was disrespectful in his court, he summoned the errant teen to the bench, cited him with contempt and ordered him to wash cars for the Sheriff's Department for four Saturdays. "Saturday morning at exactly 8:00 you will report to the Sheriff's Office. If it is pouring down rain, wear your raincoat."

He was also remembered as an advocate for children in domestic cases. Chancellor Charlie Smith of Meridian said that Judge Warner's focus was always the best interests of the children, "regardless of what the parents thought."

Justice Dawn Beam said, "He had a passion for children and tried to do what was in their best interest." He also was a stickler for starting on time "whether your lawyer was there or not," she said.

He wrote a cookbook for wild game. Inscribed in Justice Beam's copy is this: "Your greatest joy will come in serving others."

He shared hunting and fishing stories and other outdoor adventures in a



Retired Chancellor George D. Warner Jr.

"Get Outdoors" column for the *Meridian Star*. He hunted mule deer in Colorado and went reef diving on the coast of Belize. His mantra was, "If I rest, I rust."

He also published the legal reference book *Warner's Griffith Mississippi Chancery Practice* in 1991. It was a revision of the 1950 edition of *Griffith's Mississippi Chancery Practice*.

Warner grew up in the Delta and moved to Meridian in 1995 seeking opportunity, his family wrote in the obituary.

His first public office was as District Attorney. He served two terms after a 1963 election campaign that used the slogan "Let George Do It." Among his successful prosecutions was that of a Ku Klux Klansman who tried to bomb the home of a Jewish Meridian businessman.

His own home was later the target of a cross burning. He lost a third run for DA and returned to private practice in Meridian until his election to the bench.

His business ventures included rental property, and building and leasing a telephone company building. He also tried his hand at the restaurant business. His family noted that he "saw quick failure when he opened a fried chicken restaurant, 'Mom's.'"

Warner majored in agriculture at Mississippi State University and was president of Sigma Chi fraternity. He served two years in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War. He was assigned to food service at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi. He earned a law degree at the University of Mississippi School of Law after completing his military service.

## Tribal Chief Justice Kevin Briscoe died September 20

Kevin David Briscoe, former Chief Justice of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, died Sept. 20 at home in Philadelphia. He was 54.

A funeral service was held on Sept. 27 at Bogue Homa, with interment in the Bogue Homa Community Cemetery near Heidelberg.

Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians in a statement said, "We are saddened by the loss of former Chief Justice Kevin Briscoe. He was a valued member in our Choctaw community and dedicated his life to the fair and impartial administration of our Choctaw Tribal Code. He was a man who treated all people with respect regardless of their stations in life. He was a defender of Tribal jurisdiction not only for our Tribe, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, but also for many other court systems throughout Indian Country."

Judge Briscoe served as tribal Chief Justice for almost 10 years. He previously served for more than 11 years as Senior Youth Court Judge for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, and was a Tribal Peacemaker. Most recently, he ran unsuccessfully in June for a spot on the Tribal Council.

Chief Ben said, "Judge Briscoe worked his way up in the MBCI Choctaw Tribal Court System where he eventually served as the Chief Justice."

He noted that Justice Briscoe was instrumental in establishing the annual Indian Child Welfare Act Conference at Choctaw.

The program conducted its 11th conference in August.

"He had a caring spirit for his people and gave wholeheartedly to his community. Judge Briscoe leaves a mark in our Choctaw Tribal Courts and in the hearts of the Choctaw people," Chief Ben said.

Chancellor Joseph Kilgore of Philadelphia said that he modeled his own courtroom demeanor after that of Judge Briscoe. Briscoe as a Youth Court judge was one of the first judges before whom he appeared. "He was always patient and kind with me as a new attorney and was a genuinely nice guy. Judge Briscoe had a genuine concern for each young person who came into his court and was very determined to do the right thing in each case. I never saw him lose his cool. His courtroom demeanor is one that I have tried to model on the bench. He loved the Choctaw people and he served them very well."

Justice Briscoe was originally from Sandersville and attended Northeast Jones High School, according to his social media postings. He studied business administration at Haskell Indian Junior College in Lawrence, Kansas, then earned an associate of arts degree in hotel and restaurant management from Meridian Community College, where he was a member of the tennis team. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in business science management from Belhaven University. Before he joined the judiciary, he worked for the Silver Star Hotel and Casino.



**Tribal Chief Justice Kevin Briscoe speaks at the ICWA Conference at Choctaw on Aug. 10, 2017.**

He was a front office supervisor for two years and hotel manager for five years.

Justice Briscoe was a long-time member of the National American Indian Court Judges Association. He was a member of the Board of Directors, serving as regional director, two terms as Second Vice-President and two terms as First Vice-President. He was a selfless advocate for tribal justice, providing countless hours volunteering to mentor state and tribal courts and programs across the country.

NAICJA Board President Carrie Garrow of Hogsburg, NY, said, "Chief Justice Briscoe served NAICJA for many years helping to strengthen tribal courts and

ensure that tribal judges had adequate training. I still remember and use the advice he gave me when I was a new judge. He will be sorely missed."

Justice Briscoe served on the Indigenous Peacemaking Initiatives for Native American Rights Fund. Professor Polly Hyslop of Fairbanks, Alaska, who also served on the Peacemaking Initiative, recalled, "We worked together as facilitators at a Peacemaking Workshop this spring in California. He was a good man and worked hard for the youth and community. I will miss his genuine interest and integrity and humor. He touched my life and the lives of many who had the honor to know him."

## Hinds County Court Judge LaRita Cooper-Stokes died May 8



**Hinds County Court Judge LaRita Cooper-Stokes**

Hinds County Court Judge LaRita Cooper-Stokes died on May 8. She was 64.

The Jackson City Council, on which she previously served, voted on Oct. 10 to honorarily name a section of Martin Luther King Jr. Drive in her honor. The segment will begin at Woodrow Wilson Drive and extend to Maple Street at Lanier High School, her alma mater.

Judge Cooper-Stokes' husband, Jackson Councilman Kenneth Stokes, introduced the resolution that was unanimously approved by the Council. He said that remembering her in this way can encourage young people. He told media that the honorary street name represents "the significance of trying to create history and (making

sure that young people see that if they stay in school and do the right thing, things will happen for them."

Judge Cooper-Stokes was a graduate of Jackson State University and the Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University.

She served as a Councilwoman for the city of Jackson's Ward 3 from July 2012 through December 2014. She was elected to the Council position previously held by Kenneth Stokes after he was elected to the Hinds County Board of Supervisors. Kenneth Stokes returned to his longtime position on the City Council after Judge Cooper-Stokes took the bench.

Judge Cooper-Stokes was the first Black woman

to be elected as a Hinds County Court judge. Her first term began in January 2015. At the time of her death, she was senior judge, having been re-elected in November 2022 to a third term. She served on the bench for more than eight years.

Hinds County Court Judges Johnnie McDaniels and Carlyn Hicks in a statement said, "Judge Stokes served the citizens of Hinds County with integrity, compassion, and fairness while serving as Senior County Court Judge. Our prayers are with her family, friends, and the entire community of Hinds County as we all remember and honor her life and her distinguished service to others. We are grateful for the opportunity to have served alongside her, and we offer our sincere condolences to the Cooper and Stokes families."

Retired Chancellor Denise Owens, who administered the oath to Judge Stokes to begin her first term of office, remembered her as deeply committed to the people she served. "She was committed to her community. She worked hard in her community."

Before she took the bench, she provided pro bono service to those in need, Judge Owens said. "She had a real passion for helping children...and adults who are vulnerable." Judge Owens said, "Any time that we asked, she volunteered and worked on our clinics" for low-income people.

Her early legal work included assisting the

poor. She worked as a staff attorney for the Department of Human Services 1990 to 1996.

Retired Hinds County Circuit Judge Tomie T. Green remembered Judge Cooper-Stokes as a beloved public servant and friend. "Her loyalty, wisdom and her integrity is unquestionable. She was a seasoned, firm and respectful judge....She took her oath to uphold our nation's constitution and laws seriously. She was always guided by her faith and true Christian values."

"The citizens of the city of Jackson and Hinds County loved her, and Judge Stokes loved them right back. She applied the law equally, regardless of economic status, sex, race, age, sexual orientation or national origin," Judge Green said.

As a member of the Jackson City Council, "she utilized her legal skills to promote transparency and accountability," Judge Green said.

"Oh my, what a wonderful life, a glorious life. One of service, one that we can all be proud of," said friend and *Jackson Advocate* Publisher Emerita Alice Tisdale. "I remember her legacy of Christian living. She was the one you could look to for counseling. While she was kind of flamboyant with her hats and all that, she did a good job."

At her May 20 funeral, Hinds County Sheriff Tyree Jones said, "Judge Stokes' assignment was family and community behind God. She has fulfilled that assignment."

## Retired Major General and Chancellor T. K. Moffett died June 5

Retired Major General and Chancellor T. K. Moffett died June 5 at the Sanctuary Hospice House in Tupelo. He was 73.

He had dual careers in the military and the law. He spent 40 years in the military, including the U.S. Army, Army Reserve and the Mississippi Army National Guard. He practiced law for 35 years before accepting a gubernatorial appointment as chancellor on the First Chancery Court. He took office on Jan. 4, 2016, and served until Jan. 31, 2018, in the district that includes Alcorn, Itawamba, Lee, Monroe, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Tishomingo and Union counties.

His family said in his obituary, "You may have known T. K. Moffett as an attorney, a Major General, a Judge, a restaurant owner, a professor, a city prosecutor, a Deacon, a Music/Youth Minister, an author, an Army West Point Rabblerouser, or someone occasionally out of gas on the side of the road as he moved quickly from responsibility to responsibility, but his family just called him 'Granddaddy'. Whether at the beach, on the boat, singing Elvis karaoke, running a half-marathon at a whim, or driving his truck in a parade, Granddaddy was a joy. From the humblest of beginnings, his hard work and determination led him on a great adventure for both the Kingdom and his country."

Former Supreme Court Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr., who administered the oath to Judge Moffett at his investiture on Jan. 15,

2016, said, "Duty, selfless service and integrity were abiding principles for Judge Moffett. He was either in the courtroom or in his office carrying out the responsibilities of a chancellor. No litigant had to wait for him to have their day in court, or for a decision. Judge Moffett made sure that all litigants were treated with respect. His decisions were plain spoken, the facts were correct, and the rule of law was followed."

Senior Chancellor Jacqueline Mask said, "When he was practicing law, I always enjoyed having him appear in court because he was an excellent attorney. He always knew the law. He worked diligently to ensure his clients had their day in court. He was efficient, well-organized and practical. He brought all of these qualities to the bench. As a judge, he was very busy and hardworking."

She said, "Judge Moffett loved his family and was a Christian. You didn't have to be around him long before you realized that. Judge Moffett was kind-hearted, good-natured and understanding. He had a gift of being able to remain calm in a storm."

At the time he took the bench, Judge Moffett said, "I never planned on being a lawyer. God just opened some doors and has blessed my life."

He began his law practice in Tupelo in 1980, representing clients in bankruptcy, criminal law, personal injury, medical malpractice, Social Security disability and family law. He was Tupelo City



**Chancellor T. K. Moffett**

Prosecutor 1989 - 1999.

Terrill Kay Moffett was born July 11, 1949, on a small farm near Becker in Monroe County, the youngest of nine children. He graduated with honors from Amory High School.

He received nominations to all three U.S. service academies. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1971 and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant. He earned a Master of Arts degree in political science from the University of Hawaii. He was an honor graduate of the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and completed the U.S. Army War College as a Harvard Fellow.

While a student at the University of Mississippi School of Law, he taught American government at Itawamba Community College and Northwest

Community College and political science at the University of Mississippi. He also was an adjunct professor at the University of Mississippi Tupelo campus.

He was decorated for valor and commanded at every level: platoon leader, tank battalion commander, division commander. He mobilized with the 155th Armored Brigade for Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm and with the 91st Division for Operation Enduring Freedom. He was promoted to Brigadier General in 1999 and Major General in 2003. He was Commanding General of the Troop Command Mississippi National Guard and Deputy Commanding General of the 91st Division in California. His last command was the 104th Division in Vancouver, Washington. He retired from the military in 2007.

## Supreme Court, Mississippi Bar hold memorial service



Mississippi Bar President Jenny Tyler Baker, center, gives eulogy at the Bar Memorial on Oct. 10 before the En Banc Court.

The Mississippi Supreme Court and the Mississippi Bar on Oct. 10 honored the lives and service of 91 lawyers who died during the past year. Chief Justice Mike Randolph presided as eight of the nine Justices convened for the annual Bar Memorial Service in the En Banc Courtroom in Jackson.

Mississippi Bar President Jenny Tyler Baker in her eulogy said, "These individuals we celebrate and grieve today are part of our collective history. They are the history of our state. They are the history of our profession. But more importantly, they were family members."

"They were trailblazers" she said, noting the death of Presiding Justice Kay Cobb, the second female justice to serve on the Mississippi Supreme Court.

Justice Kenneth Griffis

in a response on behalf of the Court said, "We celebrate a Supreme Court Justice, several accomplished and beloved trial court judges, several distinguished legislators, Generals, other elected officials, Bar leaders, accountants, volunteer firemen and flight instructors, and we are grateful that so many served our country in the military." He noted personal ties, among them a law professor under whom he studied, and a lawyer with whom he practiced. "Some were close friends whom I miss greatly, who left us way too soon."

"These beloved women and men were musicians, poets, artists, photographers, pilots, Boy Scouts, master chefs and animal rights activists. Their hobbies included football, baseball, boating, fishing,

opera, poker, traveling, and of course one of my favorites – ZZ Top." The latter referred to the late DeSoto County Court and Youth Court Judge Mills Barbee of Hernando, who was a huge fan.

"The women and men we celebrate today made a significant contribution to our justice system. Often, these contributions were rarely noticed and, maybe, even not appropriately appreciated. Looking over the names of those we celebrate today, I know that they have made a significant difference during their lives," Justice Griffis said.

Mississippi Bar President-Elect Meade Mitchell read each name with a measured cadence, and read a Memorial Resolution which concluded, "Whereas, in the reading of these names of our departed colleagues, we ex-

press our admiration, respect and deepest gratitude for their service to our profession and for enriching our lives and communities with their friendship."

Other officials include Rankin County and Youth Court Judge Thomas H. Broome, Brandon; former District Attorney Joyce I. Chiles, Itta Bena; Hinds County Court Judge LaRita M. Cooper-Stokes, Jackson; former Sen. Joe Clay Hamilton, Meridian; former Rep. Betty Jane Long, Meridian; retired Major General Alben Hopkins, Gulfport; retired Major General and Chancellor Terrill "T.K." Moffett, Tupelo; former Medicaid Executive Director Helen Wetherbee, Madison; retired Circuit Judge Thomas Frederick Wicker, Pontotoc; and retired Circuit Judge Edward A. Williamson, Philadelphia.